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ABSTRACT

Vocational cooperative education programs have a definite position in a comprehensive high school curriculum; however, concern has been expressed regarding whether students can fulfil academic requirements for graduation. The Raise Academics in Secondary Education bill in Florida requires more academic courses for graduation. In order for vocational cooperative programs to survive as electives in the curriculum, close attention and surveillance must be given to enforce existing attendance and grade average guidelines. Vocational cooperative programs are meant to enhance and broaden student learning, but the growing problem has been that the work programs overshadow the remainder of the curriculum, taking priority over attendance of regularly scheduled required courses, resulting in loss of credit, poor attitudes, and possibly discipline problems. A program was developed in a rural central Florida high school to address these problems through careful monitoring of class and work attendance. The objectives of this study were (1) attending required classes with at least a 90% attendance record; (2) maintaining a C or better grade point average; (3) improving student attitudes toward academic studies thereby improving faculty relationships with the cooperative programs. Appendices include (1) Student and Parent Agreement Form; (2) Vocational Coop Program Survey for students; (3) Vocational Coop Program Survey for Faculty; (4) Absence/Tardy Policy; (5) Weekly Grade Report Form; and (6) Vocational Coop Individual Student Profiles. A bibliography is included. (ALL)

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VOCATIONAL COOP PROGRAMS AND ATTENDANCE -- IS THE TAIL WAGGING THE DOG?

by

Virginia H. Harper

A Practicum Report
Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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December 1983

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ABSTRACT

Vocational Coop Programs and Attendance -- Is the Tail Wagging the Dog?

Harper, Virginia H., 1983: Practicum Report, Nova University, Center for the Advancement of Education

Descriptors: School Attendance / Cooperative Programs / English / Academic Education

Vocational coop programs have a definite position in a comprehensive high school curriculum; however, concern has been expressed regarding attendance, specifically in the academic subjects required for graduation. With the passage and implementation of the RAISE (Raise Academics in Secondary Education) bill, more academic courses are being required for graduation. In order for vocational coop programs to survive in the curriculum, close attention and surveillance must be given to enforce the existing guidelines concerning attendance and grade averages. Vocational coop programs are meant to enhance and broaden student learning but the growing problem has been that the work programs overshadow the remainder of the curriculum. In other words, the work programs have taken priority over attendance of regularly scheduled required courses resulting at times in loss of credit, poor attitudes, and possibly discipline problems.

As an English teacher, the author developed and implemented a program in a public secondary school in a rural central Florida community aimed at improving attendance of vocational coop students and also aimed at the maintenance of at least a C average in required English at the senior year. This program compared grade averages, levels (advanced and regular), and attendance of the junior required English of the 1983 Spring Quin and the senior required English of the 1983 Fall Quin. The goals of this practicum were (1) to maintain at least a 90 percent attendance record, and (2) to improve or maintain at least a C average in the required English of the target students.

At the conclusion of the implementation period of ten weeks, attendance and grade point averages did improve as a result of constant surveillance of the nine target students. Recommendations are being made for this project to continue with alterations as well as the recommendation that only seniors be scheduled in the vocational education curriculum. (Appendices include a statement of the attendance policy and weekly grade reports as well as surveys conducted prior to implementation.)

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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE

This practicum was conducted in a public secondary school in a central Florida community which is best classified as a "rural small town." Even though the population is affixed at approximately six thousand people, the school district's geographical area covers approximately fifty square miles and includes forty thousand people. The closest private secondary school is fifteen miles away; therefore, the majority of the students in this particular geographical area attend the public schools. The secondary school includes grades ten, eleven, and twelve with an enrollment of fifteen hundred students consisting of an ethnic make-up of about 28 percent black, 2 percent hispanic, and 70 percent white.

As stated above the community is predominantly a rural one with most of the employment provided by agriculture or related agri-businesses (nursery supplies, grove care services, farm machinery supplies, fiberglass builders and supplies, irrigation systems, etc.); consequently, the primary source of income evolves from agriculture which includes orange groves, muck farming, and foliage nurseries. The foliage industry alone numbers over two thousand businesses ranging in size from small backyard enterprises to fifty-acre farms. It follows then that the public secondary population is comprised of students who are children of agricultural or agri-business owners while other students are children of agricultural or agri-business workers as well as a number of children of migrant work-

ers. Changes are occurring in this central Florida community because of its close proximity to a metropolitan area and large tourist attractions so that more students are slowly but surely coming from bedroom homes wherein the parents live in this "small town" but commute to the metropolitan area for work. The percentage of these latter students is very low at the present time, but growth forecasts promote this percentage will increase greatly in the next decade.

At the present this particular community is ideal for a comprehensive high school curriculum with its student population being 50 percent small town and 50 percent rural. Still another ideal factor is the community's ability to provide on-the-job training in its multi-million dollar agricultural related enterprises as well as services for those enterprises including child care, fast food restaurants, service stations, etc. Since only about half of the students of this secondary school are bused on twenty-three buses, the other half provide their own transportation or car-pool which further allows the option of selecting a vocational program in the curriculum.

The main problem that had affected the continued operation of the vocational coop programs in this particular secondary school had been absenteeism in the academic subjects required for graduation which in turn had affected grade averages. District guidelines existed which stated that students must be on time and in regular attendance and maintain at least a C average in their studies. In fact, both the student and the parent signed an agreement to the above two points as well as to other points. (See Appendix A.)

The very first step in this project was to obtain copies of the

Student and Parent Agreement Forms discussing the points of concern with the target students. Vocational coop programs are meant to enhance and broaden student learning and to prepare them for satisfying and productive work in any occupation for which there is a societal need. A bonus of the vocational programs is to make furthering educational goals possible through the process of earning money to attend college and/or vocational schools.

Still other values may be learned by students involved in a vocational curriculum. One of these values is that students bridge the gap between school and work. Stated in other terms, students learn the value of an education,for the opportunity to work in our technological society is dependent upon education and training.

The most readily recognizable value to the student, however, is that he may earn while he learns. The important role that the vocational curruculum must provide at this point is what the student does with what he earns and to emphasize the need for an education. (The two vocational coop teachers involved in this project require their students to open savings accounts and also do periodic checks on their accumulated savings.)

Regular attendance at school is imperative in order to receive a quality education. This particular district has an attendance policy which states that loss of credit is possible after six absences. The students themselves viewed absenteeism as a problem and felt that it should be dealt with using a strong policy. (See Appendix B.) Some absences are excusable and unavoidable including student illness, family illness, death in the family, pre-arranged family travel, religious holidays, and educational field trips. Many absences had been incurred by vocational coop students

which were not only uncountable according to the district's policy but also had proven detrimental to the grade point average. For example, students could be placed in the Alternative Education Center for disciplinary reasons (tardies, student/teacher altercations, student/student altercations, etc.) and not be counted absent from school. The fact remained that the student was still absent from the classroom. In addition student suspensions do not count in the six-day count. Excessive absenteeism from the classroom, for whatever reason, even for the capable student will eventually take its toll. The faculty were cognizant of this important point concerning absenteeism as denoted by the survey conducted in the 1983 Spring Quin. (See Appendix C.)

With absenteeism assuming the crux of the responsibility for the problem, particularly grade point averages in academic subjects, an Absence/Tardy Policy (See Appendix D) was incorporated for the nine senior students of this writer's English classes -- two advanced senior English classes and one regular junior English class. The four seniors in the regular junior English class were so placed for one of the following reasons: (1) making up a failure or (2) scheduling problems in the junior year. Of the two students who were making up a failure, a primary cause had been absenteeism, both excusable and unexcusable.

Among the nine target students for this practicum's proposal and implementation, definite improvement was attained. In the 1983 Spring Quin, twenty-one absences were within the countable number for the absence policy resulting in a 95 percent attendance record; whereas in the 1983 Fall Quin eight absences were within the countable number for the absence policy resulting in a 98 percent attendance record. However, when all absences are considered, chargeable and unchargeable (field

trips, pre-arranged, suspensions, AEC, etc.) the percentages read 89 percent in the spring quin and 94 percent in the fall quin. Using either count the percentage of attendance did increase and this improvement was brought about by three factors -- contact with the vocational teacher, telephone contact with the parent, and the weekly grade report. (See Appendix E.)

To implement this study individual student profiles were compiled (See Appendix F) assigning students numbers and including such information as age, sex, grade level, family situation, school transportation method, employment, work hours each week, academic goals, attendance, grades as well as levels of the English classes for both the 1983 Spring Quin and the 1983 Fall Quin. The following objectives were written to reduce tardies and absences as well as maintain at least a C average in required English courses. These objectives were to be measured over a ten-week implementation period and were:

1. Student/parent/vocational coop teacher/English teacher were all made cognizant of the agreement signed by both the student and the parent. In addition,in the first week all concerned were presented the Tardy/Absence Policy to be in effect. (Refer to Appendix D.)
2. Vocational coop students were to be in attendance 90 percent of the ten-week project employing constant surveillance by the vocational and English teachers.
3. Vocational coop program employers were to be contacted by the vocational coop teacher on each day's absence from school on the day following each absence.

4. Academic performance was to improve in proportion to improved attendance maintaining at least a C average in the required English class.
5. Attitudes were to improve as fewer discipline referrals were to develop as a result of improved attendance at school as well as fewer tardies to class.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH

Of the available literature for this practicum, research was conducted on the following subjects: attendance, cooperative programs, English, and academic education. The literature search in these cited areas revealed various studies and comments concerning the importance of attendance and the academic measurements of students in vocational coop programs.

The article entitled "An Apprenticeship Program for the Unskilled -- An Alternative for the Nonacademic Student" by Johnny R. Purvis addresses the problem of developing a program for the semi-skilled. As vocational educators began to rid themselves of the "blue collar" stigma by upgrading standards for admission, the obvious was bound to occur -- the less academically talented students left the program.[1] Mr. Purvis further indicates that vocational programs can and should exist on two levels -- academically talented and semi-skilled -- to provide a relevant educational program for both groups.

Edwin G. Yager in his article "Training Students for the World of Work -- Need Coping Mechanisms" states that students leaving the educational system and entering the world of work do not know how to cope or work with others.[2] Mr. Yager finds these coping skills are needed by both the academically talented and the semi-skilled. He implies that most school programs provide few opportunities to develop such abilities as communication in writing, better presentations, organizational skills

of both time and materials, or leadership.[3] It is common sense, therefore educationally sound, to present programs that develop the above mentioned abilities in high school rather than spend billions of dollars training and retraining adult.

Two articles dealing with attendance policies that are working reveal interesting information on an age-old problem. Robert L. Carruthers, Jr. in an article entitled "An Attendance Policy That Works" indicates that students who attend school regularly receive the maximum benefits from the instructional program.[4] He further notes that students who attend regularly generally receive higher grades, have a greater enjoyment level, and are more employable during and after leaving high school. He adds, "A clear statement of the attendance policy is necessary."[5] This particular article proved most valuable in the implementation of the attendance policy for this project.

Along these same lines Richard J. Konet in "An Attendance System That Works: The Student Attendance Review Committee" observed that students need close surveillance concerning attendance. A student attendance review committee (SARC) was established requiring that a student must explain his absence within twenty-four hours of each absence. He also noted that parental involvement must occur as soon as possible.[6] Again, this article with adaptations of its format proved to be most valuable in the attendance policy of this project.

Perhaps the most pertinent research material concerning attendance is presented by Chrissie Bamber in a pamphlet entitled Student and Teacher Absenteeism. Mrs. Bamber reminds the reader that the business world keeps close watch over employee attendance.[7] Since absenteeism in many cases

represents a loss of money to the employers, measures are quickly and forcefully instigated to reduce or remove the problem. Schools react much more slowly, for special problems occur which "are created by local attendance policies that apply to students past the maximum age for compulsory schooling."[8] Even though courts cannot force seventeen and eighteen-year-olds to attend school, local policies can require students to attend a set number of days in order to receive credit for courses.

If a district policy exists stating that a set number of days of required attendance must be met for credit, the most important point for enforcement is that all records meet the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1975, commonly referred to as the Buckley Amendment. This amendment requires school districts to develop a policy on how parents may inspect their child's records as well as delineating where these records may be seen. In addition,this amendment protects the confidentiality of student records as well as establishes procedures wherein parents can challenge questionable information.[9] Parents nor students "shed their rights at the schoolhouse door."[10] A carefully stated and executed policy involving the fair play of due process must be developed.

An article entitled "Should Teenagers Work?" by Grace W. Weinstein is of interest since it has more likely been read by parents and students than any of the educational literature presented in this collection. The author questions the value of work programs stating that the type of work most teenagers are exposed to is "nothing more than standing in an assembly line wrapping burgers."[11] Ms. Weinstein concludes that most young people are learning the wrong lessons concerning money, particularly if

the teenagers are earning money for discretionary spending. In other words if the primary reason for earning is to buy those items that parents cannot or will not buy, the overall effect of the work program is likely to be a negative rather than a positive influence in students' education.[12]

Information was also gleaned concerning the positive side of cooperative education programs and in one such article entitled simply "Cooperative Education," the main purpose of work programs is promoted. That purpose is to give practical experience which will add to a student's total educational experience.[13] A stronger statement is made by Ralph C. Weinrich and J. William Weinrich in their book entitled Leadership in Administration of Vocational and Technical Education. The Weinrichs feel that the preparation for the world of work should be a part of every student's education beginning in the elementary school and vocational education is one phase of the process of educational preparation for the world of work.[14]

Having completed the literature search and having conducted surveys of both the faculty and students in the 1983 Spring Quin (Refer to Appendices B and C), this writer developed a program involving vocational coop students to reduce absenteeism and to maintain at least a C average in required English classes. With the implementation of the RAISE bill which requires more academic credits for graduation, a program to encourage attendance by vocational students is a must so that vocational coop programs can survie as well as the students those programs serve.

Three target classes, all required English courses assigned to this writer, were used for the purposes of this project. Two of the required English classes are leveled (tracked as stanines 7 - 9) as advanced senior English and the third required English class is leveled (tracked as stanines

4 - 6) as regular junior English.

The first step of the project dealt with the identification of vocational students. The second step dealt with maintenance of accurate records of both attendance and grades. In addition close contact was made with the two vocational coop teachers involved, the administrative dean, and the attendance office.

Once the target students were identified, this writer obtained a copy of the district's Student and Parent Agreement Form for each student. (See Appendix A.) In the first week of the implementation, each target student received a copy of this project's Absence/Tardy Policy. (See Appendix D.) Also a weekly grade report was sent home each week for parental signature to further involve the parents in the target students' attendance and grades. (See Appendix E.)

At the conclusion of the program attendance and grade reports were analyzed. Conferences were held with all concerned -- the two vocational teachers, the administrative dean, and the attendance office -- to measure the success of the project.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This practicum was researched and implemented from 29 August 1983 through 4 November 1983 which is conclusive of the first quin of the current school year covering a ten-week period of time. Problem identification research was gathered and prepared in the last five weeks of the fourth quin of the preceding school year for comparison purposes of the project's success.

Below is the schedule of events conducted during the implementation period:

29 August 1983	Identify and orient target students distributing and discussing the Absence/Tardy Policy. (See Appendix D.)
31 August 1983	Obtain copies of the Student and Parent Agreement Forms from the vocational teachers. (See Appendix C.)
Daily	Check attendance and tardies.
Daily	Vocational teachers/administrative dean/student/parent conferences.
Weekly	Grade reports.(See Appendix E.)

30 September 1983 Mid-term progress reports.

4 November 1983 Final reports of the project.

Under the existing district policy concerning attendance, students with six or more absences, not including pre-arranged, religious holidays, field trips, suspensions, and placement in the Alternative Education Center, cannot pass courses regardless of academic performance unless they and their parents meet with the administrative dean to justify the absences. This justification process is referred to as re-evaluation. Tardies are also included in the count leading to a re-evaluation process. Since pre-arranged absences are excusable and can include illness of the student, illness in the family, death in the family as well as include field trips under the auspices of the school (not to mention religious holidays, suspensions, and AEC), students in reality could miss a great deal of school and never face re-evaluation.

Student absenteeism has a direct effect on grades. The nine students identified were handed a copy of this project's Absence/Tardy Policy (See Appendix D.) which required a conference between the vocational teacher and English teacher on the first absence. On the second and third absences parents were involved and on the fourth absence a conference was held between the administrative dean and the vocational student placing the latter on a probationary basis in order to remain involved in the vocational coop program. The fifth absence would culminate in possible suspension from the vocational coop program. In addition, vocational coop employers were contacted whenever a student was absent from school.

This particular project aimed at involving the parents at an earlier date than the existing attendance policy of this secondary school. This

early involvement proved to be most helpful to the success of the project. Further, this project delineated more specifically procedures to be followed after the third tardy with a dean/student conference being required on the fourth tardy, loss of parking privileges for one week on the fifth tardy, and a discipline referral on the sixth tardy. The fifth tardy was most important to the target students since six of the nine students provided their own transportation to school and two of the nine rode with a friend.

Of the eight absences during this project only four of the nine students were involved. Of those four students, Student V 2 F is responsible for four of the absences. On the first absence contact was made with the vocational teacher who in turn called her work location the same day. The student was at work and was reminded that absence from school meant also absence from work as stated in the agreement signed by V 2 F and the parent. The second and third absences resulted in telephone contacts wherein the parent stated that the student was sick on the second absence and on the third absence that she was needed at home to care for her younger sister who was ill and unable to attend school. The fourth absence finally hit home for at that time Student V 2 F was informed of her probationary standing in the vocational coop program. Sometimes money or the possible loss of money talks and she needed to maintain her work hours to continue to be able to meet her car payments. One added item is the subsequent fall of her grade point average. On the fourth absence her grade dropped from a B to a C, and she was never able to regain her former standing. She had not only accrued four absences but she also had two added absences, one pre-arranged for a dental appointment and the other for placement in the

AEC because of tardies involving another class.

All of V 2 F's absenteeism occurred in the first six weeks of the project so that there was time to salvage her vocational standing and her grade. The grade was of primary importance for the student was a senior making up a quin of junior English that had been missed because of scheduling problems. The tail had been wagging the dog, but this project eventually helped the dog wag the tail.

Student V 8 F is a classic case of having missed six days but none of them chargeable to the attendance policy of either the school or this project's policy. Student V 8 F's mother died in the seventh week of the implementation period. As a student who was not academically talented but in a senior advanced English course because she wanted the challenge, this student struggled to maintain a C average. The C was maintained because of this student's drive and will to succeed. During the eighth week of the project Student V 8 F also missed two days for a field trip to the State DECA Convention held in Daytona Beach. Having been through a traumatic experience the week before and feeling that she needed a change, this writer provided her with make-up work meeting with V 8 F after school hours. In addition, contact was made with other required course teachers to offer the same provisions.

Student V 4 F showed the greatest academic improvement for an A was earned in an advanced English course as opposed to a B in a regular English course the previous quin. Of the two absences incurred by V 4 F, both involved personal sickness. On the first absence the vocational teacher called the work location and was told the student had called in sick. On the second absence the parents were contacted by phone and the

latter stated the student had a cold and other personal complications.

The student designated as V 3 F missed only one day of school but did report to work. The vocational teacher called the work location and reminded her that absence from school also meant absence from work as cited in the Student and Parent Agreement Form. No further absences occurred.

Student V 6 M also had one absence which was caused by illness. When the vocational teacher called the work location, he was told that V 6 M had called in sick. Again, no further absences occurred.

Students V 1 F, V 5 F, V 7 M, and V 9 F all missed two days which were unchargeable, since they were on a field trip to the State DECA Convention held in Daytona Beach. All four students made up their work prior to departure and did any additional work required upon their return. In addition V 7 M had one day in the Alternative Education Center because of excessive tardies to another of his academic courses. This day in the AEC occurred in the third week of the project and the tardy problem was quickly cured when the weekly grade report showing this fact went home. V 7 M pled to no avail for this writer not to write that fact on his grade sheet, but the fact remained that even though he was not absent from school, he was not in the classroom. Everything that is done or discussed in the classroom cannot be recorded on a sheet of paper and sent out. V 7 M is the real success story of this project and will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

The most valuable tool of this project was the weekly grade report. Each Friday the students were handed this grade and absence record to be taken home and signed by the parent. Some of the parents used this report as a means of communicating -- asking questions or making comments. Any

tardies that were recorded immediately came to a halt so that none of the nine students incurred beyond two tardies. Of the two who spent one day in the AEC, definite action evidently was taken, for no more such days were spent in the AEC. Students do not volunteer this type of information; therefore, the parents cannot help to correct what they are unaware of.

The last week of a quin, candidates for re-evaluation are identified and of these nine target students, none had to re-evaluate either on this project's policy or on the school's attendance policy.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

As stated previously this proposed project began with the identification of the problem using two surveys conducted during the 1983 Spring Quin (fourth nine week). Identification of the target students (those involved in the vocational coop programs in the spring as well as the fall) could not occur until the pre-planning period prior to the 1983 Fall Quin. Once the students were identified the first change in the proposal was made. Originally, the project was to deal with only the two advanced senior English classes; however, the district had approved the local school's program of giving English teachers four classes, one duty period, and one paper grading period as opposed to the usual five English classes and one duty period. All English students are required by the state to write at least one paper each week which greatly increases the teaching load. In addition to grading all these papers, folders are kept for each student wherein students' papers are filed marking weaknesses and commenting on strengths.

This state requirement program is referred to as the Writing Enhancement Program (WEP). At designated times these folders of the students' individual writings are checked by the appointed building administrator and on other occasions, usually at the end of the year, by the appointed district administrator. It is a program that is checked, not just eye wash, for WEP is one of the steps in upgrading academic achievement. In other words, WEP is one of the herald trumpets of the RAISE bill.

The reduction to four classes of no more than one hundred students per day as well as the implementation of the RAISE bill caused a great deal of havoc in the scheduling process. These two factors brought about the change to include three classes rather than two in order to have as many eligible students involved as possible. These three classes were now the original two senior advanced English and one regular junior English. The last class had four seniors enrolled, two making up a credit due to failure and two who had scheduling problems in the previous years.

In these three required English classes a total of nine seniors made up the target project of vocational coop students in a required academic English course. Five of those target students were in the advanced classes with four of the five new to the tracking. The other four were seniors in a regular English program for the reasons stated above.

In order of their importance four factors seemed to have considerable bearing on student attendance and grades. These factors were the following:

1. Age/Maturity -- This writer is in total agreement with the suggestions made by both the faculty and students on their separate surveys that only seniors should be permitted to take part in a vocational coop program. Seventeen and eighteen-year-olds have fewer absences for the end is in sight plus this age groups is involved in many school related activities that have their own flavor of comraderie. An added problem will occur as each year's graduating class for the next three years will have an increase in graduation requirements. This year's senior class must have a minimum of 60 quins or 15 credits; the current junior and sophomore

classes must have a minimum of 88 quins or 22 credits, and the present freshman class must have a minimum of 96 quins or 24 credits.

2. Transportation -- The ability and means to supply transportation to and from work plus the maturity to handle the world of work and the world of school are of great importance. Vocational coop programs grant an aura of freedom that its students must have the wisdom and judgment to handle. Students dependent upon others or parents for transportation are greatly handicapped for too much "down" time can be spent waiting to get a ride to and from work or school. These students have to organize to succeed and this training in organization both at school and work can be a tremendous help as they continue to mature and totally enter the world of work.

Of the nine target students the following methods of transportation were involved:

2 -- 22% -- Own a car and make payments

4 -- 44% -- Drive a car provided by parents

2 -- 22% -- Ride with a friend

1 -- 11% -- Rides the bus to school and father transports to work*

(*Since the father in this instance is medically retired, he can easily provide this taxi service without the student's having a great deal of waiting time.)

3. Family Situation -- Seven of the nine students live with both parents which seems to be a very important point. One of these seven lost her mother during the project. The two remaining students live in a family situation of mother/stepfather. One of these latter situations seemed to have a marked effect on the student's attendance and attitude.

On the third telephone contact the mother finally became interested in her daughter's attendance at school. Why three became the magic number can only be explained by the fact that during the course of the third telephone conversation, it was revealed that the daughter and stepfather did not have a good relationship. Quite possibly there was enough tension in the family and the mother decided that she could alleviate this one problem before it created more problems. Whatever the reason, the daughter did attend school and was successful in her studies. All other parental contacts made decisive changes in all the other students' attendance.

4. Academic Goals -- This factor held by far the most bearing on the students' attendance and grades. These academic goals were:

5 -- 56% -- Attend college

2 -- 22% -- Armed Services

1 -- 11% -- Vocational school

1 -- 11% -- World of work

To help attain these goals the nine students maintained a C or above average in English and compare with the preceding quin with an overall percentage improvement from 2.2 to 2.4 even though in the spring quin only 11 percent were in advanced classes as opposed to the implementation time period when 56 percent were in advanced classes. (See Figure 1.)

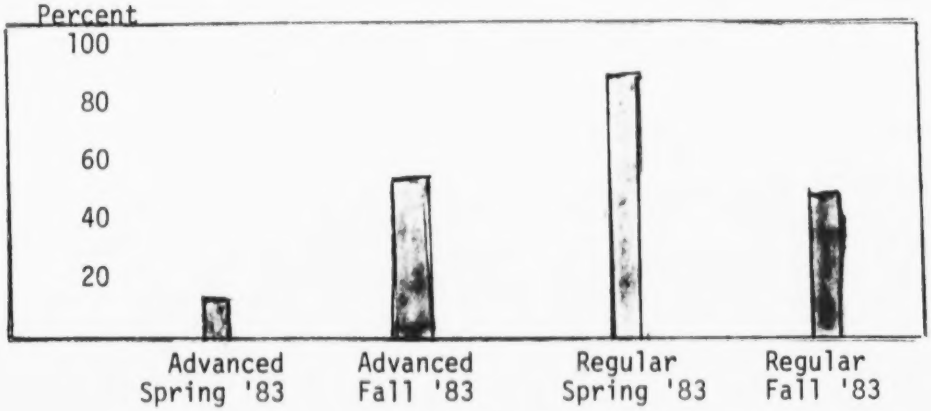

Figure 1: Levels

A further improvement can be seen in comparing the attendance records of these nine students from the spring quin and the project implementation period. These nine students accrued twenty-one chargeable absences or had a 95 percent attendance record in the spring quin while in the project quin these same students accrued only eight absences or had a 98 percent attendance record. When all absences are considered to include field trips, pre-arranged, etc., the spring quin absences total forty-three or a percentage of 89 percent while the project quin totals twenty-six or a percentage of 94 percent. (See Figure 2.)

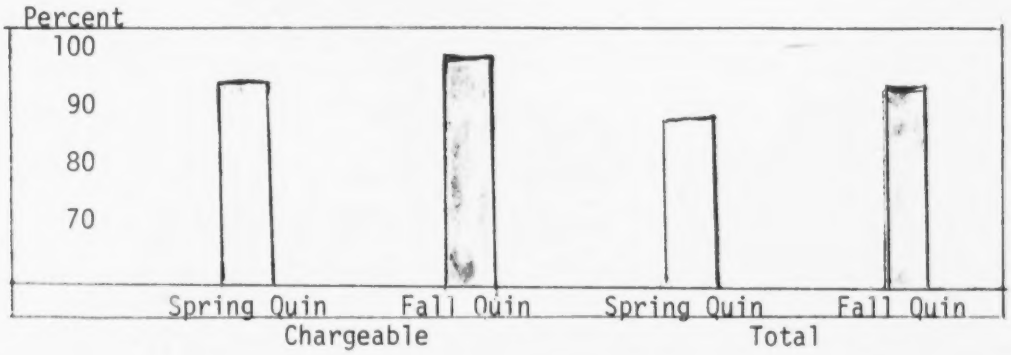

Figure 2: Attendance

One of the points the Student and Parent Agreement Form states is that if a student is absent from school he may not go to work. Working closely with the two vocational teachers and the administrative dean, this particular absenteeism problem was leashed with a firm hand. Most of the findings of this project are too limited to make any broad assumptions or grandiose statements concerning attendance, but the one point stressed in the objectives concerning grades and attendance was attained with these nine target students. That point simply is that surveillance of existing guidelines can and will increase attendance which in turn will improve grades. (See Figures 3 and 4.)

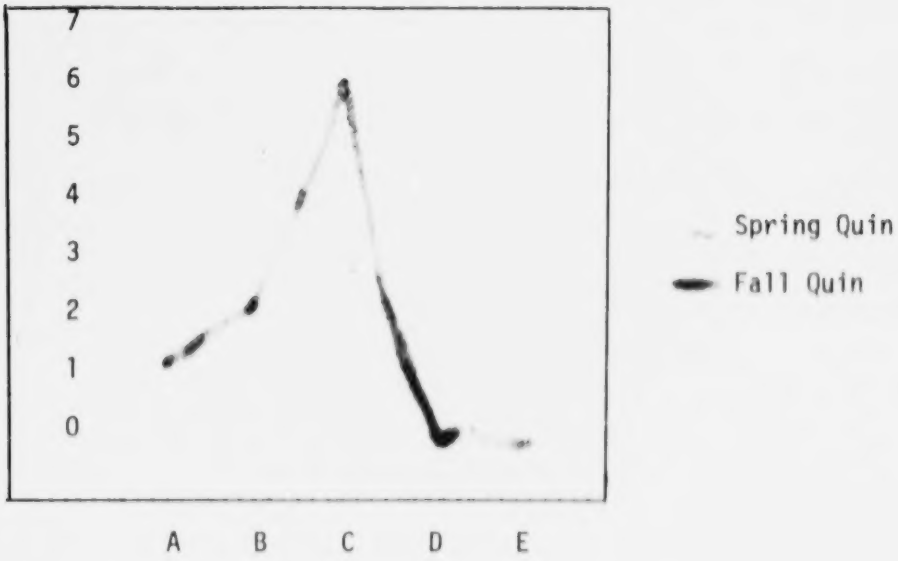

Figure 3: Grades

	A	B	C	D	E
Spring Quin					
Number	0	5	3	0	1
Percent		56%	33%		11%
Fall Quin					
Number	1	2	6	0	0
Percent	11%	22%	67%		

Figure 4: Grade Percentages

As mentioned in an earlier chapter one student was the real success story of this project. Student V 7 M failed his junior English course because of lack of motivation, academic goals, and excessive absenteeism. A great deal of maturing can occur in a short period of time and this student maintained a C or better average in all his required courses including another English class. He has his sights set on joining the armed

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services and has become highly motivated to gain his high school diploma. As the second child of four children in a low averaged income family, he also needed to work. Both of these factors require attendance at school and in his words the impact of this project is summed up, "Ain't no way I'm gonna mess up with everybody checking on me."

One last assessment of the project is the fact that none of the target students had to be re-evaluated for absenteeism either under the project's policy or the school's policy. Vocational coop students can survive in academic subjects and do well if close accounting is impressed upon them. In answer to the question "Is the Tail Wagging the Dog?" No, but a firm hand must be kept on the leash.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the state's mandating increased requirements for graduation as designated through the adoption of the RAISE bill, this writer recommends that this surveillance program be continued by the vocational coop teachers at the local and district levels. Continuance of this program may mean survival of vocational coop programs as they have come to be known. In the very near future a seventh period will be added, but today's freshman class must fulfill more academic requirements for graduation than the present senior class. Each current year's class will face increases in graduation requirements. The present seniors from whom the target students for this practicum were selected could have a minimum of 60 quins or 15 credits to meet graduation requirements. The juniors and sophomores must have 88 quins or 22 credits, and the freshmen must have 96 quins or 24 credits to meet graduation requirements.

The addition of the seventh period may have little or no effect when the above requirements are considered, for students have very few electives under these new requirements. Vocational coop programs can survive in the electives if the guidelines are closely monitored. Several changes in this project need to occur and these alterations are listed below:

1. Rather than academic teachers obtaining copies of the Student and Parent Agreement Forms, have the students show these forms for perusal and initialing to the academic teachers returning the forms

to the vocational teachers. All involved then are aware of the points agreed upon and this sharing should begin a good articulation among the departments.

2. Alter the administrative dean involvement so that all absences are checked upon by the vocational teacher reporting the absenteeism to the dean on the occurrence of the fourth absence. In other words the vocational teacher should make telephone contacts and conferences on the first three absences.

3. Issue a progress report to all students in the vocational coop programs to be filled out by all of their teachers four times during a quin rather than require a weekly report. These progress reports should be circulated on the following schedule:

a. Second week of quin

b. Fourth week of quin (mid-term)

c. Seventh week of quin

d. Ninth week of quin (final)

The last teacher to whom the grade progress report is submitted could either hand it personally to the vocational teacher or place it in the vocational teacher's mailbox. Should vocational students be in jeopardy concerning their grades, early diagnosis of the problem would allow preventive measures to be taken in order to maintain the C average.

4. Should a student not receive approval for credit for any one of his academic courses in the re-evaluation process, he should be removed from the vocational coop program until grades and attendance will qualify him for re-admittance.

Certain objectives of this project do not need change and should be enforced. One of these desired objectives is that vocational students

must maintain at least a 90 percent attendance record to remain in the vocational coop programs. This attendance will in turn reflect upon the second objective which is the maintaining of a C or better in the overall grade point average. The last objective that is pertinent to this project and definitely recommended is improve student attitudes toward academic studies thereby improving faculty relationships with the students of vocational coop programs as well as with the programs.

This writer strongly recommends that only seniors be allowed to elect a vocational coop program. This recommendation is heavily influenced by the increased graduation requirements as cited previously. Further, a student having fulfilled successfully the majority of his graduation requirements has set goals that will allow him to elect a well-planned and monitored vocational coop program. These programs can and should survive to offer students the much needed preparation for the world of work, be it immediately after high school graduation, enlistment in the armed services, or in matriculation of a continuing vocational coop program at the college level.

NOTES

[1] Johnny R. Purvis. "An Apprenticeship Program for the Unskilled -- An Alternative for the Nonacademic Student." NASSP Bulletin, May 1982, p. 106.

[2] Edwin G. Yager. "Training Students for the World of Work -- Need Coping Mechanisms." NASSP Bulletin, January 1982, p. 28.

[3] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[4] Robert L. Carruthers, Jr. "An Attendance Policy That Works." NASSP Bulletin, December 1980, p. 117.

[5] Ibid., p. 117.

[6] Richard J. Konet. "An Attendance System That Works: The Student Attendance Review Committee." NASSP Bulletin, March 1983, p. 106.

[7] Chrissie Bamber. Student and Teacher Absenteeism. (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1979), p. 16.

[8] Ibid., p. 28.

[9] Louis Fischer, David Schimmel, and Cynthia Kelley. Teachers and the Law. (New York: Longman, Inc., 1981), p. 287.

[10] Bamber, p. 28.

[11] Grace W. Weinstein. "Should Teenagers Work?" McCalls, June 1983, p. 54.

[12] Ibid., p. 56.

[13] "Cooperative Education." The Education Digest, October 1975, p. 51.

[14] Ralph C. Weinrich and J. William Weinrich. Leadership in Administration of Vocational and Technical Education. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1974), p. 19.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT AND PARENT AGREEMENT FORM

The Student Agrees with the Following:

In-School

1. To be on time and regular in attendance.
2. To maintain at least a C average in my studies.
3. To accept counseling and guidance from the teacher-coordinator cheerfully.
4. To recognize the teacher-coordinator as the final authority for making adjustments or changes in job training.
5. To attend a full school day at any time during the school year that I am not employed.
6. To participate in planned field trip activities.
7. To participate in vocational student organization activities, when provided, as part of the instructional program.

On-the-Job

1. To reflect a sincere desire to work and to prepare myself for my future in the world of work.
2. To work at an approved training station (place of employment).
3. To provide my own transportation to my job, and when required, to work on weekends and during school vacations.
4. To be on time and regular in attendance and to notify my employer in advance in case of necessary absence.
5. To perform my duties on the job in such a manner that I will bring credit upon myself, my school, and the program.
6. To be loyal to my employer and to promote my employer's business and public image in the community.
7. That I may not resign a position without permission of the teacher-coordinator and without giving my employer as much advance notice as possible.
8. To notify my teacher-coordinator immediately if my position at a training station is terminated for any reason.
9. That on days I am absent from school, I may not go to work.

Summary

I understand that I shall be dropped from the program if I fail to abide by the above conditions.

_____ _____

Date Student's Signature

The Parent Agrees with the Following:

I shall do my part in assisting my son/daughter to fulfill all obligations to the Cooperative Vocational Education Program including regular school attendance and maintaining a satisfactory scholastic standing.

_____ _____

Date Parent's/Guardian's Signature

APPENDIX B

VOCATIONAL COOP PROGRAM SURVEY

The following survey was taken from twenty-one junior and senior students in May 1983:

	Yes	No	Undecided
1. Do you feel that vocational coop programs should be offered in the high school curriculum?	100%		
2. Do you find absenteeism prevalent among vocational coop students?	57%	43%	
3. Would you favor a student's being dropped from a vocational coop program if he is unable to re-evaluate his absences in a nine-weeks' period?	76%	24%	
4. Do you feel that vocational coop students have problems with grades because of work?	71%	29%	
5. Do you feel that vocational students have problems with attitude concerning academic subjects?	48%	52%	
6. Do you feel that academically talented students should be allowed to enroll in vocational coop programs?	95%		5%

Please list any suggestions that you feel would improve attendance and the vocational coop programs. The following were cited:

1. Offer vocational coop programs to seniors only.
2. If absent from school, students may not go to work.
3. If grades drop, students should be placed on probation. If there is still no improvement, students should be dropped from the vocational coop programs.
4. Limit the work hours to four to six hours per day.
5. Provide closer working relationships between employers and the school.

APPENDIX C

VOCATIONAL COOP PROGRAM SURVEY

The following survey was taken from thirty-two faculty members including five vocational coop program teachers in May 1983:

	Yes	No	Undecided
1. Do you feel that vocational coop programs should be offered in the high school curriculum?	81%	19%	
2. Do you find absenteeism prevalent among vocational coop students?	59%	31%	10%
3. Would you favor a student's being dropped from a vocational coop program if he is unable to re-evaluate his absences in a nine-weeks' period?	88%	12%	
4. Do you feel that vocational coop students have problems with grades because of work?	59%	31%	10%
5. Do you feel that vocational coop students have problems with attitude concerning academic subjects?	72%	19%	9%
6. Do you feel that academically talented students should be allowed to enroll in vocational coop programs?	72%	19%	9%

Please list any suggestions that you feel would improve attendance and the vocational coop programs. The following were cited:

1. Students must maintain an overall C average.
2. If students are unable to re-evaluate absences, they should be dropped from the vocational coop programs.
3. Offer vocational coop programs to seniors only.
4. Stress work is not a prerequisite for school.
5. Vocational coop classes should be made effective.
6. Permit students to leave school for those jobs only that do not operate after school hours.
7. If absent from school, students may not go to work.
8. Enforce rules governing how many hours a student may work each week.

APPENDIX D

ABSENCE/TARDY POLICY

All vocational coop program students in the target English classes will be given a copy of this policy the first class meeting, 29 August 1983.

1 Absence	Vocational Teacher/English Teacher Conference
2 Absences	English Teacher/Parent Telephone Contact
3 Absences	Dean/Parent Telephone Contact
4 Absences	Vocational Teacher/Dean Conference
5 Absences	Vocational Teacher/Dean/Parent/Student Conference
2 Tardies	Vocational Teacher/English Teacher Conference
3 Tardies	Equals one absence
4 Tardies	Dean/Student Conference
5 Tardies	Loss of Campus Parking Privilege for One Week
6 Tardies	Discipline Referral

Students with five (5) or more absences or any combination of absences and tardies will receive a grade of E, but may still re-evaluate their absences. Students who receive disapproval in the re-evaluation process face possible expulsion from the vocational coop programs. Pre-arranged absences, religious holidays, field trips, AEC, or school suspensions will not be counted in the five absence policy.

APPENDIX E

WEEKLY GRADE REPORT

Week	Absences	Tardies	Grade	Comments	Parent's Signature
2 September 1983					
9 September 1983					
16 September 1983					
23 September 1983					
30 September 1983					
7 October 1983					
14 October 1983					
21 October 1983					
28 October 1983					
4 November 1983					

Mid-term progress reports will be reflected on 30 September 1983 and the final grade standing and total absences will be reflected on 4 November 1983.

Parent's Comments:

APPENDIX F

VOCATIONAL COOP

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PROFILES

Note: Student profiles were compiled for each of the nine students in the target classes which reflect the student situations at the end of the first quin of 1983 (Fall Quin). Added information is given on each student concerning absences and causes for those absences.

Student Number:	V 1 F
Age:	17
Birthdate:	21 April 1966
Grade Level	12
Family Situation:	Lives with mother and stepfather. Both parents work. Oldest of two children.
School Transportation:	Owns a car and is making payments.
Place of Employment:	Red Lobster Hostess
Number of work hours per week:	15 to 20
Academic Goals:	Attend college studying to be a medical examiner.

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	B	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	B	Advanced
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	2	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	0	

Note: Student V 1 F missed two days for a field trip concerning the State DECA Convention held in Daytona Beach. This student made up all work before departure. (Field trips do not count as absences for they are conducted under the auspices of the school and considered a part of its educational curriculum.)

Student Number:	V 2 F
Age:	16
Birthdate:	19 November 1966
Grade Level:	12
Family Situation:	Lives with mother and stepfather. Both parents work. Oldest of two children.
School Transportation:	Owns a car and is making payments.
Place of Employment:	Speedy King Instant Printing Typesetter
Number of work hours per week:	25
Academic Goals:	Vocational school training in computer typesetting.

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Regular
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	4	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	4	

Note: On the first absence contact was made with the vocational teacher. He called the work location and reminded the student that absence from school also meant absence from work and that an agreement of that fact had been signed by both the student and the parent. On the second and third absences, telephone contacts were made with the parent. Also the dean made telephone contact on the third absence. On the fourth absence the dean and vocational teacher conferred with the student concerning not only loss of credit but possible expulsion from the vocational coop program, for two other absences had been incurred but were not chargeable -- one AEC and one prearranged.

Student Number:	V 3 F
Age:	16
Birthdate:	29 October 1966
Grade Level:	12
Family Situation:	Lives with both parents. Both parents work. Youngest of two children.
School Transportation:	Owns a car that is paid for.
Place of Employment:	Loving Care Nursery Child Care
Number of work hours per week:	30
Academic Goals:	Attend junior college locally.

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	B	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	B	Advanced
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	3	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	1	

Note: Contact was made with the vocational teacher who in turn called the work location and reminded the student that absence from school also meant absence from work. The vocational teacher also reminded the student that an agreement of that fact had been signed by both the student and the parent. No further absences were incurred.

Student Number:	V 4 F
Age:	17
Birthdate:	31 October 1966
Grade Level	12
Family Situation:	Lives with both parents. Both parents work. Youngest of two children.
School Transportation:	Owns a car that was paid for by her parents.
Place of Employment:	Ashley Aluminum Secretary
Number of work hours per week:	20 to 25
Academic Goals:	Attend college majoring in business.

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	B	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	A	Advanced
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	0	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	2	

Note: Conferred with the vocational teacher on the first absence. He called the work location confirming that the student was also absent from work. On the second absence, telephone contact was made with the parent. The latter stated student had a cold and other personal complications.

Student Number:	V 5 F
Age:	18
Birthdate:	11 November 1983
Grade Level:	12
Family Situation:	Lives with both parents. Both parents work. Second of three children.
School Transportation:	Owns a car that is paid for.
Place of Employment:	Eckerd Drugs Clerk/Cashier
Number of work hours per week:	35 to 40
Academic Goals:	Attend junior college taking courses in computer programming.

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Regular
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	2	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	0	

Note: Student V 5 F missed two days for a field trip concerning the State DECA Convention held in Daytona Beach. This student made up all work before departure. (Field trips do not count as absences for they are conducted under the auspices of the school and considered a part of its educational curriculum.)

Student Number:	V 6 M
Age:	16
Birthdate:	20 October 1966
Grade Level:	12
Family Situation:	Lives with both parents. Both parents work. Youngest of six children.
School Transportation:	Rides with a friend.
Place of Employment:	Shores Spraying Dry Wall Sprayer
Number of work hours per week:	30
Academic Goals:	High school diploma to enter the world of work.

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Regular
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	1	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	1	

Note: Conferred with the vocational teacher on the first absence. He in turn called the work location confirming that the student was also absent from work. No further absences were incurred.

Student Number:	V 7 M
Age:	17
Birthdate:	12 January 1966
Grade Level:	12
Family Situation:	Lives with both parents. Both parents work. Second child of four children.
School Transportation:	Rides with a friend.
Place of Employment:	Florida Ponkan Orange tree and plant nursery worker.
Number of work hours per week:	35
Academic Goals:	High school diploma and entrance into the Armed Services (possibly the Navy).

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	E	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Regular
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	8	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	0	

Note: Student V 7 M missed two days for a field trip concerning the State DECA Convention held in Daytona Beach. This student made up all work before departure. (Field trips do not count as absences for they are conducted under the auspices of the school and considered a part of its educational curriculum.)

This student was also placed in the Alternative Education Center for one day because of excessive tardies to one of his classes. (Again, this placement does not count as an absence, for work is sent to the AEC so that the student does not fall behind in class.) The day in the AEC occurred in the third week of implementation and cured the tardy problem, for this day was recorded on the weekly grade report.

Student Number:	V 8 F
Age:	17
Birthdate:	13 February 1966
Grade Level:	12
Family Situation:	Lives with both parents. (See note.) Father is medically retired. Youngest of seven children.
School Transportation:	Rides the bus in the mornings and father picks up in the afternoons.
Place of Employment:	Independent Wholesale Warehouse Worker
Number of work hours per week:	40
Academic Goals:	High school diploma and entrance into the Armed Services, specifically the Air Force.

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	B	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Advanced
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	1	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	0	

Note: Student V 8 F lost her mother the seventh week of the implementation period. She was able to come in and pick up her assignments the week of the funeral and maintain her attendance record through pre-arrangement for four days' absence. (School policy makes provisions for emergencies of this type.)

This student also missed two days for a field trip concerning the State DECA Convention held in Daytona Beach. This student made up all work before departure. Taking into account the above, this field trip was therapeutic for Student V 8 F. (Field trips do not count as absences for they are conducted under the auspices of the school and considered a part of its educational curriculum.)

Student Number:	V 9 F
Age:	17
Birthdate:	10 May 1966
Grade Level:	12
Family Situation:	Lives with both parents. Father works; mother is a housewife. Second child of three children.
School Transportation:	Drives a car provided by father.
Place of Employment:	Albertson's Courtesy Clerk
Number of work hours per week:	20 to 25
Academic Goals:	Attend college majoring in journalism.

Spring Quin 1983	Grade and Level	B	Regular
Fall Quin 1983	Grade and Level	C	Advanced
Spring Quin 1983	Absences	0	
Fall Quin 1983	Absences	0	

Note: Student V 9 F missed two days for a field trip concerning the State DECA Convention held in Daytona Beach. This student made up all work before departure. (Field trips do not count as absences for they are conducted under the auspices of the school and considered a part of its educational curriculum.)